

Reviewed by Arefa Cassoobhoy, MD, MPH, WebMD Medical Editor

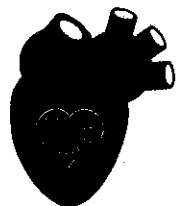
BY THE NUMBERS

HEART HEALTH

FACTS AND STATS ON TOP HEALTH CONDITIONS

By Heather Hatfield

Number of people in the U.S. who will die this year because of cardiovascular disease: 800,000

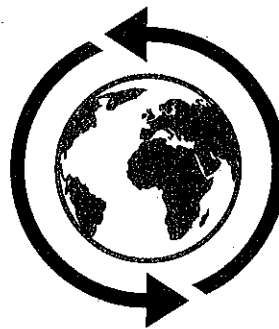


2,200

Number of people in the U.S. who will die per day this year because of cardiovascular disease

17 million

Number of people around the world who will die this year because of cardiovascular disease



23 million

Number of people around the world who will die in 2030 because of cardiovascular disease

49

Percentage of Americans who have at least 1 of the 3 leading risk factors for heart disease—smoking, high blood pressure, high LDL

#1

Ranking of cardiovascular disease as a cause of death in the U.S.

\$108.9 billion

Annual cost of coronary heart disease in the U.S., including health care services, medications, and lost productivity



98.9 million

Number of Americans with high cholesterol levels (above 200 mg/dL)

Increased risk of heart disease among smokers vs. that of nonsmokers

2-4X



Reduction in risk of heart disease one year after quitting smoking

50%



20
Percentage of global cardiovascular disease attributed to diets high in saturated fats and low in fruits and vegetables

31.9 million

Number of Americans with very high cholesterol levels (above 240 mg/dL)

Percentage heart disease risk is reduced by moderate-intensity exercise for about 20 minutes every day
15%



2-4X

Increased risk of cardiovascular disease if you have diabetes

Sources: American Heart Association; CDC; Circulation; Journal of the American Medical Association; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; World Health Organization; World Heart Federation

Pump It Up

Your heart is your most important muscle. Learn how to keep it in shape

BY STEPHANIE WATSON

REVIEWED BY AREFA CASSOOBHOY, MD, MPH, WEBMD WOMEN'S HEALTH EXPERT

At the gym, you hit the weights to trim and tone muscles everyone can see—biceps and triceps, abs and hamstrings. But what about muscles you can't see, like the all-important one hidden just behind your breastbone? Without a strong heart to pump oxygen-rich blood to your cells and organs, bulging biceps are irrelevant.

To keep your heart in fighting form, you don't need expensive gym equipment or a beefy trainer. Just add these strategies to your daily routine.

Revamp Your Eating Regimen

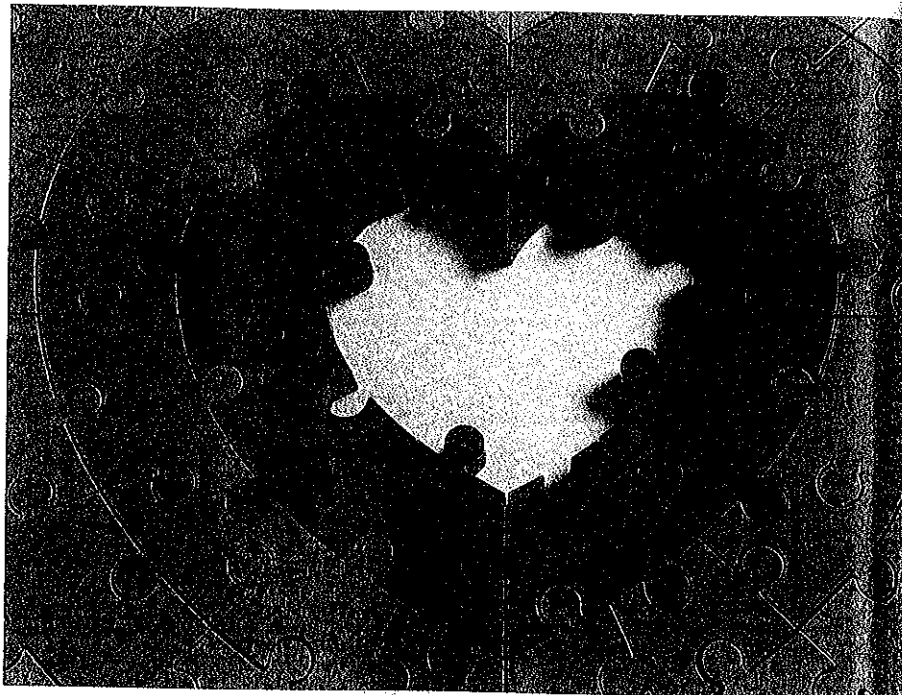
Eating right can trim you down and reduce strain on your heart. Instead of dwelling on individual foods such as eliminating sugar, adopt a healthy eating pattern, says Lori Mosca, MD, MPH, PhD, director of preventive cardiology at New York-Presbyterian Hospital and professor of medicine at Columbia University Medical Center.

Start with a healthy breakfast of protein and "good" carbohydrates (oatmeal, whole wheat toast). For the rest of the day, break your plate into quarters: one-quarter fruit, one-quarter vegetables, one-quarter lean protein (skinless chicken breast, fish), and one-quarter healthy carbs (brown rice, whole wheat bread). Instead of adding salt, which can raise blood pressure, pump up the flavor with healthier alternatives like basil, garlic, and oregano.

Get Realistic About Exercise

The heart, like other muscles in the body, needs exercise. Working out lowers blood pressure and cholesterol, and helps get your heart risks under control. Official guidelines suggest 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity five days a week. Most, though, need to bump it up to 60 minutes just about every day to maintain or lose weight.

But don't think you have to spend that hour chugging away on a treadmill. "It doesn't have to be the traditional kind of gym activity," Mosca says. Do what you love. Turn on music and dance, or walk the dog at a brisk pace. Just get moving.



Relax Away Stress

Though studies haven't proven it causes heart disease, stress has been linked to increased blood pressure and to artery damage—neither of which is good for your ticker. Plus, when you're stressed, you're more likely to give in to unhealthy indulgences—such as comfort food, cigarettes, and too much alcohol. You can't erase stress, but you can manage it with relaxation techniques such as bio-feedback, yoga, and meditation.

Stamp Out Cigarettes

"Smoking has numerous toxic effects on the heart and the rest of the body," Mosca says. It increases blood pressure and raises "bad" LDL cholesterol—and that's just the start. "The good news about smoking is that the toxic effects and the increased heart disease risk are cut by 50% within six months of stopping."



GET MORE
healthy living
tips and info at
[webmd.com/
askthepharmacist](http://webmd.com/askthepharmacist)

This content is selected and controlled by WebMD's editorial staff and is funded by Walmart.